

REPORTS OF FIELD PEOPLE, by Mrs. Keough, Chairman
(ROANOKE CONFERENCE) 6-17-48

U.S. Rural Electrification Administration

We have reviewed and summarized our problems and are ready to make our reports. The items common to all reports are: per diem and car mileage, overtime, and field equipment. We thought the best plan would be to have the reports read by the chairman of the different divisions.

Mr. Kenyon, Chairman, Applications and Loans Division:

At a meeting of the field force of Regions I, II, III, and IV, Applications and Loans Division, held June 15-16, 1948, Charles Kenyon was appointed chairman and Harry McCollum was appointed secretary.

The following resolutions were passed:

RESOLVED-

1. That the field staff of Regions I, II, III, and IV, Applications and Loans Division, are deeply appreciative of the opportunity afforded them at this conference to meet and discuss mutual problems and express the hope that the opportunity be repeated and, if possible, expanded at future conferences.
2. That vacancies occurring be advertised and filled with reasonable promptness, and that all applicants be notified of action taken, because extensive delays are damaging to the morale of the applicants.
3. That, with respect to the payment of overtime pay, recognition be given that the field staff is at all times working at least as many hours as is the headquarters staff.
4. Whereas considerable reclassification of headquarters jobs has taken place, that consideration be given to resurveying field jobs with the view of reclassifying upwards.
5. That when headquarters staff members of divisions other than the "line divisions" visit the field on specific activities, the field personnel engaged in the same or related activities be informed, in order that better coordination of effort may be obtained.
6. That, because present rates of per diem and mileage remuneration are inadequate, investigation be made into the possibility of having these amounts increased under existing regulations, or into the possibility of obtaining revision of existing regulations which will permit increases in these items.

7. That the Travelers' Report Form be revised because in its present form it is wasteful of paper, and of the time and energy of the field personnel.
8. That investigation be made into the possibility and practicability of supplying field personnel with some type of recording device for use in recording reports.
9. That policy be established with respect to allowing time during regular working hours in Field Headquarters or elsewhere for the performance of necessary paper work and other official activities.
10. That the Administrative Services Division make investigation into the prospects of purchasing or designing and constructing a filing system and carrying case suitable for the use of field personnel. It should be light in weight, portable, and dustproof.

Mr. Ralph Smith, Chairman, Engineering Division:

After a comprehensive discussion concerning administrative policies, working conditions, and other factors with which the field engineers are directly concerned in their relationships with the Washington office of REA, the following motions were proposed, seconded, and unanimously adopted by the field engineers of Regions I, II, III and IV-

RESOLVED:

1. That additional engineering personnel be recruited for both the field and office engineering staff for the purpose of relieving the heavy individual work load and for securing more equitable territorial distribution.
2. That closer contact be established between field personnel, and between field and office personnel in all regions for the purpose of accurate and speedy dissemination of information.
3. That per diem and car mileage be increased to conform with the rate of \$8.00 per day and 8¢ per mile being paid in other government agencies, or to show cause why these increases cannot be granted to meet the necessary out-of-pocket expenses incurred on official travel.

4. That field engineers be kept better informed as to decisions reached between the regional engineers, the division chief, and others regarding matters which concern the field representatives; and that decisions made by field engineers be "backed-up" by the regional engineers, or if changes are made that such changes be made through the field engineers.
5. That means be provided for reimbursement to field engineers for stenographic services whenever such services are deemed necessary for the preparation of special reports and studies.
6. That overtime pay be granted so long as the present shortage of field personnel continues and the huge work load requires field personnel to work constant overtime.
7. That the travel audit section notify claimants on occasions when under claims are made on expense vouchers.

Mrs. Marie Keough, Finance Division:

Pursuant to the privilege afforded us to present to the Administration suggestions for the improvement of working conditions and the general welfare of the Field Audit Staff of Regions I, II, III, IV, a conference was held and after comprehensive discussion, we request that the following points be given consideration:

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1. That REA continue its efforts to assist Field employees in the procurement of new automobiles, either through fleet purchases or priority from car manufacturers.
2. That the responsibilities and accomplishments of the field audit staff be given recognition which would place them in a comparable grade classification with the field personnel of the other three line divisions; and that adequate promotions, within a reasonable time, be given members of the staff as they qualify for such advancement.
3. That the Washington office effect a procedure for a more frequent distribution of mail for the purpose of keeping the field personnel informed of new procedures and policies, the delay of which has often caused embarrassment to the field representatives.
4. That the Washington office exercise more promptness and exactness in filling the requests for supplies and that consideration be given to furnishing better grades of stationery and other supplies, with special attention given to columnar pads as to punching and perforation.
5. That per diem and car mileage be increased commensurate with present day costs and also in conformance with the policies of other governmental agencies in this respect.

6. That the processing of expense vouchers be expedited in every possible case.

7. That, although the curtailment of time in performance of audits is recognized as of vital importance, we ask that the Administration give recognition to the variance in conditions in our field endeavor.

Mr. Milton Pilcher, Chairman, Management Division:

It was agreed by the field representative of the Management Division that the following list of items should be presented at the general session.

These items were decided upon after thorough discussion by the representatives and are presented in the form of recommendations. It is our thought that any action taken as a result of these recommendations will be to the best interests of the REA program.

The recommendations are as follows:

1. Sufficient time should be allowed in itineraries to provide for preparation of field reports in order that it will not be necessary for field representatives to prepare reports after normal working hours.
2. Consideration should be given to providing field representatives with electronic dictating equipment or to allowing compensation for necessary public stenographic service.
3. Field representatives should be promptly informed of all actions taken as a result of recommendations contained in field reports, or be advised of reasons for modifying the recommendations.
4. Consideration should be given to possible complications resulting from submitting a time and attendance report certifying that no overtime was worked and at the same time submitting a Management Division Field Representative's Semi-Monthly Time Report showing actual hours worked, including overtime.
5. Action should be speeded upon recommendations contained in field representatives' reports, including follow-up on requests which pertain to action by other divisions.
6. Itineraries and changes in them should be transmitted to field representatives in sufficient time to permit adequate preparation for the assignments.

7. More intensive effort should be made to effect the prompt delivery of incoming correspondence and reports to the proper individual.
8. In order to bring about a needed improvement in REA's relations with the borrowers and in the field representative's reception by the borrowers it is urged that all correspondence be promptly answered.
9. Consideration should be given to a plan whereby each field representative will be scheduled to visit the Washington office for a two-week period twice a year.
10. It is requested that the Administrator take any possible action to bring about an increase in the present mileage allowance of 5¢ and to present per diem allowance of \$6.00 in order to more adequately compensate field personnel for travel expenses. •

